DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 162 261 CS 004 457

AUTHOR Johnston, Michelle H.
TITLE Conceptions of Reading: The Rep Test. Research Series No. 7.
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Inst. for Research on Teaching.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Feb 78
CONTRACT 400-76-0073
NOTE 9p.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University, 252 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, Michigan 48824 ($1.00)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Tests; Beliefs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Measurement Instruments; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Research; Screening Tests; *Sorting Procedures; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Behavior
IDENTIFIERS *Kelly (George A); Reading Attitudes; *Role Construct Repertory Test

ABSTRACT

Conceptions of Reading (COR), a research project within the Institute for Research on Teaching, has modified the "Role Construct Repertory Test" (Rep Test) to tap teachers' conceptions of reading. Developed by psychologist George Kelly to aid in discovering personal belief systems, the Rep Test has been modified by other researchers to aid in determining how people organize information. For the COR group's research, teachers with strong points of view about reading were identified through a Proposition Sort in which they sorted statements about reading according to their beliefs. The teachers then performed modified Rep Test tasks requiring them first to list students' names on cards, sort them according to how the students received reading instruction, and explain their reasons for sorting them in that way; and then to compare three students to each other, telling how two were alike and one was different in terms of reading and success. Teachers then discussed their beliefs about instructional materials and reading. Data gathered from the teacher/interviewer dialogues yielded information regarding six conceptions about reading and reading instruction. Classroom observations have provided evidence that teachers' behaviors are fairly consistent with their conceptions as tapped by the Rep Test, indicating that the Rep Test, in combination with the Proposition Sort, is an effective screening method. (GW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED162261

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Research Series No. 7

CONCEPTIONS OF READING:

THE REP TEST

Michelle H. Johnston

Published by

The Institute for Research on Teaching
252 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

February, 1978

The work reported herein is sponsored by the Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University. The Institute for Research on Teaching is funded primarily by the Teaching Division of the National Institute of Education, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the National Institute of Education. (Contract No. 400-76-0073)

CS 004 457

CONCEPTIONS OF READING:

THE REP TEST

by

Michelle H. Johnston*

Conceptions of Reading (COR), one research project within the Institute for Research on Teaching, has employed a modification of George Kelly's "Role Concept Repertory Test" (Rep Test) in order to tap teachers' conceptions of reading. This reliance upon the Rep Test to screen potential subjects for research has generated many questions. This paper is an attempt to answer those questions.

History of the Rep Test

Psychologist George Kelly developed the Rep Test to be used in clinical settings as an aid to discovering personal belief systems. Respondents are asked role-related questions which require them to sort and compare (according to a given list of possible roles) individuals with whom they are familiar. A key feature of Kelly's Rep Test is triadic sorting, through which respondents compare three individuals, telling how two of the individuals are similar and one is different according to Kelly's prescribed roles.

Jarrod W. Wilcox and David E. Hunt each modified the Kell Rep Test for their own uses. Wilcox changed the test in order to determine how

*Michelle H. Johnston is a research associate with the Institute for Research on Teaching and a member of the Conceptions of Reading project.

stockbrokers make decisions and as a means of examining various uses of the Rep Test. In his Rep Test modification, Wilcox required stockbrokers to sort popular stocks according to prescribed titles or roles, such as "fast growth stocks."

David E. Hunt, an educational psychologist, asked teachers to do triadic sorting of their pupils. Specifically, the teachers were required to sort and compare students according to behaviors, personal characteristics and how environmental aspects of school affected the students. Hunt was attempting to see how teachers thought about children.

The Rep Test suited the work of both Wilcox and Hunt in several ways. Wilcox (1972, pp. 41-42) stated that the test revealed underlying reasons for different types of decisions. In addition, the test focused on concrete terms asking the respondents to draw from past experiences, thus limiting the observer's influence. Hunt (1975, p. 272) found that his modification of the Rep Test allowed teachers to think about and discuss teaching and students using their own terminology, relying upon their own background experiences. Further, he contended that the reasons for inconsistencies in previous studies concerning teacher awareness of the teaching situation and its influence on teacher behavior was the failure to allow teachers to express themselves in a manner meaningful to them. Hunt (1976, p. 5) stated that his use of the Rep Test forced teachers to make their implicit conceptions explicit. Finally, both Hunt and Wilcox found that the Rep Test identified the ways in which the people they tested organized information.

COR Use of the Rep Test

The COR group used a Rep Test modification in its research on reading for many of the same reasons Hunt and Wilcox did. In addition, the Rep

Test was flexible enough to allow interviewers to probe for clarification of teachers' responses. For example, when a teacher stated that two children were the same because they had problems using phonetic clues, interviewers probed for specific examples and possible causes of the problems.

The procedures used by the COR group were from a further adaptation of Hunt's Rep Test modification developed by Michelle H. Johnston in her doctoral dissertation. Johnston's procedure included three steps: Pre-Rep Test, Rep Test, and Post-Rep Test.

According to the Johnston procedure, which takes approximately minutes, the teacher was instructed to do the following tasks:

1. Pre-Rep Test

    a. List 15 students on 3 x 5 cards (one student per card).
    b. Sort the students according to how they receive reading instructions.
    c. Tell what categories the sort represents and explain the reason for sorting in such a manner.

2. Rep Test

    d. Address the interviewer as if the interviewer were to be the children's next teacher.
    e. Sort out three students and compare how two are alike and one is different in terms of reading (repeat five times).
    f. Re-sort, contrasting two successful students and one unsuccessful student.

3. Post-Rep Test

    g. Discuss educational needs (materials, personnel, etc.) which would help unsuccessful students.
    h. Discuss general beliefs about reading.

While the teacher sorts and compares students, the interviewer continually probes for the reasons behind the teachers' statements.

Another instrument besides the Rep Test was used to identify teachers

for the COR research study. During June-July, 1977, teachers who were enrolled in Michigan State University summer term education classes were given a Proposition Sort (an instrument that requires teachers to sort statements about reading according to the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statements). The Proposition Sort was used as an initial screening device to identify teachers who had strong points of view regarding reading. Following this initial screening, the Rep Test was given to those teachers who had strong reading viewpoints in order to substantiate the screening results of the Proposition Sort and to identify teachers for future observations.

Analysis of Data Generated by the Rep Test

The COR group gathered data from the Rep Test in two forms: taped cassettes with accompanying notes, and transcripts of the interview dialogues. The interview dialogues included teachers' descriptions of their students and reading programs as well as the teachers' stated reasons for their teaching behaviors. As a result, the data were massive.

Coding sheets were developed to analyze the content of the transcripts and cassettes. Each transcript or cassette was examined for statements in which teachers described their teaching techniques, students, grouping procedures, and choices of materials. In addition, teacher statements were examined for six types of conceptions about reading previously identified by the COR group.

The six conceptions about reading and how it should be taught identified by the COR group were: "natural language," "basal," "linear skills," "interest," "integrated whole," and "confused/frustrated/non-reading based." Teachers who had natural language conceptions utilized their students' language as an integral part of reading programs. An

interest conception was reflected by teachers who used self-selection and tradebooks as key features of their reading programs, attempting to find materials of interest to their students. Those teachers who had integrated whole conceptions taught reading throughout the day in all content areas and followed unit-like approaches. Teachers identified as having basal conceptions relied on basal (basic) textbooks for instruction. The use of skill hierarchies and drills was predominant with teachers having a linear skills conception. Teachers having confused/frustrated/non-reading based conceptions did not appear to have a strong reading viewpoint.

Current Status of the Rep Test

The COR group is still investigating the reliability and validity of the instruments used in the study. Yet, from the results to date, we believe that the Rep Test, in combination with the Proposition Sort, make an effective screening method. That these tools provided the effective screening is being established by the classroom observations which are now in progress. There is evidence from such observations that the teachers' behaviors are fairly consistent with their conceptions as tapped by the Rep Test.

In addition, the COR group is investigating other pupil sorting techniques which could expand the use of the Rep Test. For example, during interviews, the researchers ask teachers to sort their pupils according to how the pupils receive reading instruction in order to gain more knowledge about teachers' impressions of children, notions about reading, and uses of materials.

Summary

The COR group used a transformation of George Kelly's Rep Test to tap teachers' reading conceptions as part of a teacher screening method. Data generated by the Rep Test were used to substantiate information obtained about teachers from a proposition sorting instrument. Following the substantiation of information during the screening process, the COR group selected teachers for observation as part of their research study. Because the Rep Test focused on practical reading issues and allowed teachers to use their own terminology, it appeared to be an effective screening device, resulting in teachers' stated conceptions being consistent with their teaching behaviors.

References

Hunt, D.E. Teachers are psychologists too: An application of psychology to education. Iowa City, Iowa: The American College Testing Program, 1976.

Hunt, D.E. The teachers' adaptions: "Reading" and "flexing" to students, Journal of Teacher Education, 1975, 27, 268-275.

Johnston, M.H. A descriptive analysis of teachers' conceptions of reading using a variation of the Kelly role concept repertory list. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 1977.

Kelly, G.A. The psychology of personal constructs: A theory of personality. (Vol. 1). New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1955.

Wilcox, J.W. A method of measuring decision assumptions. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1972.